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SUBJECT: TANZANIA: LETTER FROM THE AMBASSADOR TO ASSISTANT
SECRETARY BARRY LOWENKRON

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1. Please deliver the following letter to the Assistant
Secretary Barry Lowenkron, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights

SIPDIS
and Labor.

2. Begin text:

Dear Assistant Secretary Lowenkron:

I am writing in support of two proposals to advance democracy
in Tanzania that our Embassy recently forwarded to your
Bureau: one to improve cooperation among the members of the
Zanzibar House of Representatives and the other, to build
capacity of the women legislators in the Union Parliament.

As you know, over the past two decades, the leadership of
Tanzania has consistently honored the country's constitution
and respected term limits. Since 1985, the incumbent
president has stepped aside and proactively supported the
democratic process to allow Tanzania's citizens to elect a
new leader. This distinctly positive trend has been
particularly strong in Mainland Tanzania where international
observers deemed as "free and transparent" the December
2005 Union general elections that brought the former Foreign
Minister, Jakaya Kikwete, to the Presidency.

The government of semi-autonomous Zanzibar has moved more
slowly to strengthen democratic institutions. Zanzibar's
October 2005 general elections were marred by voting
irregularities and sporadic violence as reported by NDI and
other international observers. However, from a broader
perspective, these observers acknowledged that the Zanzibar
election process had improved in many areas when compared to
previous ballots in 2003, 2000 and 1995. The main opposition
party in Zanzibar enjoys strong support particularly on the
island of Pemba, and in November 2005, took their seats in
the House of Representatives to work for change from within
the system rather than boycott the legislature, as in past
years. This step is a positive signal for Zanzibar's
democracy that has presented a unique opportunity for us to
advance President Bush's Freedom Agenda in sub-Saharan
Africa.

President Kikwete is scheduled to visit Washington from May
17 to 21 and will meet with Secretary Rice, other key U.S.
government leaders and Members of Congress. President
Kikwete told me just last week that he is seeking to expand
ties rapidly with the United States and wants to build our
bilateral relationship "to the highest level." He would
like to initiate cooperation in peacekeeping, work with us to
halt trafficking of persons, and receive U.S. assistance to
strengthen further democratic institutions in Tanzania,

particularly in Zanzibar. Every time I meet with President Kikwete, he has shared with me that reconciliation on Zanzibar, both to reduce the tensions between the political parties and to bridge the divide between the isles of Pemba and Unguja, is paramount on his first-year agenda.

President Kikwete has also demonstrated his commitment to the advancement of women within the political system and the government. The Union Parliament requires that 30 percent of all parliamentarians are women; the President selects all his ministers and deputy ministers--50 positions total--from among these legislators. President Kikwete appointed more women to key cabinet posts than any previous president: a total of sixteen women out of the fifty, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.

We would hope that during President Kikwete,s upcoming visit, it would be possible to announce the State Department,s support for these proposals in order to enhance the legislative skills of the Zanzibar House of Representatives and to contribute to the development of women legislators.

Knowing that we share a mutual goal to nurture positive democratic trends, such as those unfolding in Tanzania, I look forward to your favorable response to these proposals.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Retzer, Ambassador
End text.
RETZER